**Mid and West Wales Regional Stakeholder Forum**

**06/06/2023**



**Adroddiad o’r cyfarfod**

**Meeting report**

Mid and West Wales Regional Stakeholder Forum

The forum met on the 6th June 2023 between 10:30 and 11:00GMT following the conclusion of the national Wales and Borders Stakeholder Forum.

**Attendees**

**Forum Members**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ioan Branigan |  |  |
| Toni Macey |  |  |
| Rebecca Johnson |  |  |
| Philip McDonnell | Swansea CAN |  |
| Rich Middleton | GWR |  |
| Jack Palmer |  |  |
| Michelle Roles | Transport Focus |  |
| Claire Sterry |  |  |
| Lucy Taylor | Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations |  |
| Liz Williams | Pembrokeshire Tourism |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Transport for Wales**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Alex Chung | Community Engagement Officer (Metro Central & Bay) |  |
| Tomos Davies  (Chair) | Community Engagement Officer (Mid and West Wales) |  |
| Mark Jacobs | Performance Manager (Traws) |  |
| Matthew Payn | Project Manager (Class 153 Active Travel) |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

**Note from the Chair, Tomos Davies**

*“Welcome to the June 2023 Mid and West Wales Regional Forum. My name is Tomos Davies, I’m the Community Engagement Officer for Mid and West Wales, covering for Alex Bryant-Evans who is currently on leave. I'd like to welcome Matt Payn and Mark Jacobs from TFW who will be providing us with updates on the Class 153 active travel project from Matthew and Mark will be updating on the TrawsCymru T1 bus service from Carmarthen to Aberystwyth. I would probably ask all the questions to be asked after each presenter has finished, so we can go through the present meeting more efficient. So, I would like to introduce Matt Payn and he'll be able to present on the Class 153 active travel project on the Heart of Wales Line.*

**Agenda**

1. **Heart of Wales Line, Matthew Payn, Project Manager (Class 153 Active Travel), Transport for Wales.**

Matthew Payn, Transport for Wales’s Project Manager for the Class 153 Active Travel project on the Heart of Wales Line. Matthew opened the item by introducing himself to Forum participants as well as outlining the project. He made an apologise about his signal as he was currently on a TfW train heading towards to West Wales.

Matthew explained the project was to take six class 153 trains that were previously owned by Northern and purchased by Transport for Wales to be transformed to focus on encouraging active travel routes for the Heart of Wales Line. This is by increasing the number of bike spaces on the trains and redesigning the layout. Current service of one carriage on the line, is now being upgraded to feature two carriages for future services.

After he explained the purpose of the project, Matthew outlined to the forum at what stage the project was at and what had currently been done to date. Engagement with a wide range of stakeholders had been undertaken by TfW throughout the last year to understand the needs and ambitions that stakeholders expected. Working collaboratively with stakeholders three concept designs had been produced. He then went onto explain that from those concept designs, we were in the process of finalising a final design.

Unfortunately, at this stage of the meeting, we had lost Matthew to bad signal and was unable to finish his presentation to the forum. Tomos, waited for Matthew to reconnect, however, was unsuccessful and moved onto Mark to present an update on TrawsCymru T1 service.

1. **TrawsCymru T1 Service, Carmarthen to Aberystwyth, Mark Jacobs, Contract & Performance Manager, Transport for Wales.**

Mark Jacobs, Transport for Wales, Contract & Performance Manager for TrawsCymru Network introduced himself and briefly explained TrawsCymru to forum members. TrawsCymru was set up to provide medium to long distance connections to key towns and cities across Wales connecting and working collaboratively with Transport for Wales network. The service is sponsored by the Welsh Government with Transport for Wales supporting the operations on behalf of the Welsh Government with bus operators.

He explained that T1 service between Carmarthen to Aberystwyth is the first route to come under the new management of Transport for Wales. Mark explained that this route was to be facilitated by fully electric buses built in China as part of the Welsh Government commitment to lower CO2 emissions and transition to more sustainable modes of transport. The service launched in March 23 and within though three months on average the buses were using around 45% of the battery capacity on around trip between Carmarthen and Aberystwyth sighting the efficiency of the vehicles.

Mark then went on to show that customer feedback was positive and that the service was showing high levels of reliability, thanks to the hard work of maintenance staff at TrawsCymru depot. Of which, staff had taken on amount of work to make sure the service of each route was being provided to the highest possible standards. As a result, a new standard of service quality has been set Mark said, which has now helped to significantly grow customer grow using Traws routes. Chart was then shown, demonstrating customer growth from January to May of 2023, which proved that service was not only growing but had consistent number of passengers repeating journeys.

As part of the innovation of not only using electric vehicles on the T1 route, we had now also launch ticket buying via the TrawsCymru app for ease of use for customers to allow them to plan a multi-journey with other services and collections to TfW trains. Mark explained as a result of the app launching, we have seem a significant number sales increase.

He finally set out TrawsCyrmu long term plan to provide a consistent level of high standards with regards to punctuality, reliability, vehicle quality, vehicle presentation both externally and internally as well as comfort between journeys for customers. To achieve this Mark explained that work had gone into monitoring and telematics of drivers across cornering, acceleration, breaking and overall driving standards. Mark accepted that the services were still in their early days and that data was not showing accuracy as expected but admitted things were improving as we understand monitoring tools and overcome certain challenges.

As part of the quality of high standards, staff and drivers were being trained on customer services levels that the service expects as well as current ticketing offered to inform customers. A long with this, staff and drivers were being trained to explain and provide advice to customers who wish to connect with rail services. Mark explained that one of the aims of TrawsCymru was to be an integrated transport network with rail services in Wales. He explained that work had been done with the timetables of services to align with trains connections and that information was now being provided at certain stations such as Carmarthen and Aberystwyth on Traws services. Mark accepted more work needed to be done to provided up to date information and rise roadside publicity. He sighted that improvements were being made as access on TrawsCymru website now showed maps linking in with rail journey to better inform customers of onward connections and links across Wales between bus and rail.

Lastly, Mark sighted that a lot of work was going into improving the purchasing experience of tickets via the app and website, in which he accepted had not always been the easiest of tasks to do. As long with this improvement, to encourage more customers, special promotions on tickets were being offered such as family ticket for £10 with unlimited number of children that can travel for free with two fare paying adults through school holidays.

At this stage in the forum, Mark concluded his presentation and Tomos opened the forum to questions to Mark. Michelle Roles from Transport Focus Wales asked Mark how we plan to manage to demand on the T1 service. Michelle sighted that she had used the service noted how popular it was but explained that due to this, journeys became very overcrowded and a bit of a nightmare. She went on further to say that, if the T1 service was promoted more, it would see even more customers up take.

Mark explained to Michelle that currently the T1 service is hourly between Carmarthen and Aberystwyth. In total, we have 8 vehicles that operate that route. As result, he explained that at any given time, there are 5 vehicles out in service and three back at the depot. One returning to the depot for charging and two charging at the depot already. He further sighted that, capacity on buses were very limited and that it was important that the access for all scheme was adopted to be as accessible to members of the public that were disabled, which as a result reduced the capacity of each vehicle as seats must be taken out to accommodate the access for all spaces. However, Mark said that if demand was high and more buses were needed to be running. With the 8 vehicles, we could in theory increase frequency to suit demand. He explained, we could do this by studying customer numbers, of which areas of the route had the most demand and sectioning off areas, where additional vehicles could run for short journeys. Mark gave the example that at the moment, there was a lot of demand between Carmarthen and Lampeter, as a result, he said we could deploy extra vehicle to cover jus that section of the network to meet demand. He lastly, sighted that in general, a reason for high demand was due to tourist and holiday visitors that use the service and that data had shown from September numbers were a lot lower as visitor market drops off.

Michelle thanks Mark for that answer and went on to also thank Mark and team for all the positive changes that had been made. She, then went on further to ask Mark about contract renewal with operators for Traws services and requirements of the vehicles, if within the contract they would follow suit as the T1 buses.

Mark explained that all the contracts will have the specification for the cleanest form of diesel, which is EUR 6 that would only be for two years as the contracts only last two years. Mark sighted that certain routes would run on electric vehicles like T1 but outlined that all services would have to meet EUR 6 regulations.

Michelle thanks Mark again for the answer and process to ask her final question on passenger demand after the summer months as well as sighted that her own data showed passenger numbers increasing on Sundays.

Mark sighted that we had gone from 700 customers per day to 1000 customers per day and that was still rising. He said, while being busy is a great problem to have, we were monitoring demand and if we need to increase frequency, we could.

There were no further questions from forum members. Tomos, thanked both presenters and members for taking part in the forum. Of which, he informed everyone would get a copy of presentations and that the next Mid and West Wales Forum would be held in September with invites being sent out and members to confirm their attendance as soon as possible.

## Actions

The actions below were raised during the forum and will be addressed prior to the next Regional Forum where possible.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Action** | **What will be done?** |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

## Forum digital chat highlights

## Next Regional Stakeholder Forum

The next Mid and West Wales Regional Stakeholder Forum is scheduled for September 2023. The meeting will be held virtually over the Microsoft Teams platform between 11:00 and 11:30